



### The BUZZ: Exclusively for Blue Ribbon Foundation Volunteers

YOU – our valued volunteers – are central to the success of the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation's mission, so we want to stay connected to you year-round! Look for issues to be emailed three times a year: January, May and September.



### 2025 Volunteer Sign-Up

In less than five short months it will be time to sign up for volunteer shifts at the 2025 Iowa State Fair. The May issue of *The Buzz* remains the primary communication tool to kick-off the volunteer sign-up process using the VolunteerLocal sign-up portal.

To make this process as easy as possible, detailed sign-up information will be available in the May issue - expect it to land in your in box by mid-month. Once you receive that issue, you will have a few days to prepare for signing up.



### Do you love to Garden?

Do you have time this Spring and Summer to help the Fair's grounds crew tidy up landscaping? Are you willing to share your gardening talents to help clean out flower beds, pull weeds, plant dozens of flowers, and help make the Fairgrounds gorgeous for the busy summer season?

If yes, then [email Meg](#) and we will connect with you on specific date options and details. Tentative plans include prepping flower beds in mid to late April and then planting flowers mid to

So, check your schedule, talk to friends and family members to coordinate volunteering dates and shifts, and give thought to what works for you before going into the portal.

We know it's a bit of a mad rush when the portal opens, especially for groups of people that want to volunteer together. To solve this issue, we've worked with the staff at VolunteerLocal to ensure that groups have a smoother sign-up experience. Those details will be explained in the May issue but if you are one of those individuals who signs up several people together, feel free to contact Meg anytime and she will talk you through the new process.

Questions of any type are always welcome. Reach out to Meg at [Meg@BlueRibbonFoundation.org](mailto:Meg@BlueRibbonFoundation.org) or 515-262-3111, ext. 370 as you consider your availability to volunteer for the Blue Ribbon Foundation this year.

late May. Volunteers who have assisted us with these tasks in the past will automatically be contacted to help us again. We love experience!

We had nearly three dozen wonderful volunteers in 2024. Come join this dedicated group of volunteers as we prepare the Iowa State Fairgrounds for the best 11 days of the summer!



### Let's Stay Connected

Do you want to stay in-the-know with all things Blue Ribbon Foundation? Then click the link below to read the most recent newsletter:

[Winter 2025 Newsletter](#)



## Exciting Upcoming Renovation Project

An exciting, inclusive **Variety Star Playground** will be built on the Iowa State Fairgrounds in 2025! The Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation is thrilled to work with new partner Variety - the Children's Charity of Iowa to create this special addition to the Fairgrounds. Dedicated to offering something for everyone, the Fair will update the current Fun Forest play area to be accessible for all, allowing children and adults of all abilities to enjoy playing together, creating an environment that encourages connection and fun. The playground will have an agricultural theme with farm animals spread throughout easy-to-navigate surfaces.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

## Completed Fairgrounds Project

This past Fall much-needed renovations were completed at the **Blue Ribbon Foundation office**. Deteriorated shake shingles and siding were removed from the main Earth Home and nearby garage. New shingles were installed over the front door with a low-maintenance metal siding placed under the roof eaves along the front facade. The garage also received new siding and the flat roof was stripped and resealed. Interior office work included fresh paint on all common-area ceilings and walls.



Many of our volunteers have been with us for decades and **Lee and Carol Brentlinger** are two of the longest. Their Blue Ribbon Foundation volunteering adventure started in 1998. Their daughter Megan volunteered right alongside them starting at age 14. She joined the fun every Fair until she went off to college.

Lee and Carol spend most of the year in Mesa, Arizona but always prioritize being in Iowa during the Fair so they don't miss this favorite tradition. They've really noticed how much the Fair has grown over the past 26 years. Back in the beginning they could only volunteer one or two days because of jobs and family responsibilities. After retirement, they've enjoyed increasing their volunteering commitment. A minimum of four days seems to be the norm.

The Blue Ribbon Foundation has many long-time partnerships with various organizations in central Iowa. Not least of these connections is one with John Deere Financial. Since the Foundation's early beginnings selling bottled water, JDF employees have been right there with us filling shifts at the Agriculture Building water booth. Charley Starnes was key to this connection when in 1998 he asked if JDF employees could take over staffing this booth. We said absolutely and so this partnership continues to this day.

Charley recruited **Jody** (left) and **Todd** (center) **Jacklin** early on and they have been selling bottled water since 2000. Their co-worker (and Jody's good friend since they were 16) **Teresa Bazzocco** (right) joined them in 2004. Together they cover morning and afternoon shifts on the



Lee mentioned, "We have always thought that it is important for generations to come to know a real State Fair! WE LOVE IT!"

Their favorite Fair foods are a corndog, of course, and the beef tips & mushroom plate. And always a peach shake from Bauder's. Lee and Carol are truly committed to our mission because they shared that "even though we are getting older, we still want to contribute to the great Iowa State Fair!!"

**Thank you to Lee and Carol for many years of commitment to the vitality of the Iowa State Fair.**

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### Important Dates

**Corndog Kickoff** - Saturday, July 12

**Volunteer Reception** - Thursday, July 17 (tentative)

**Iowa State Fair** – August 7 to 17

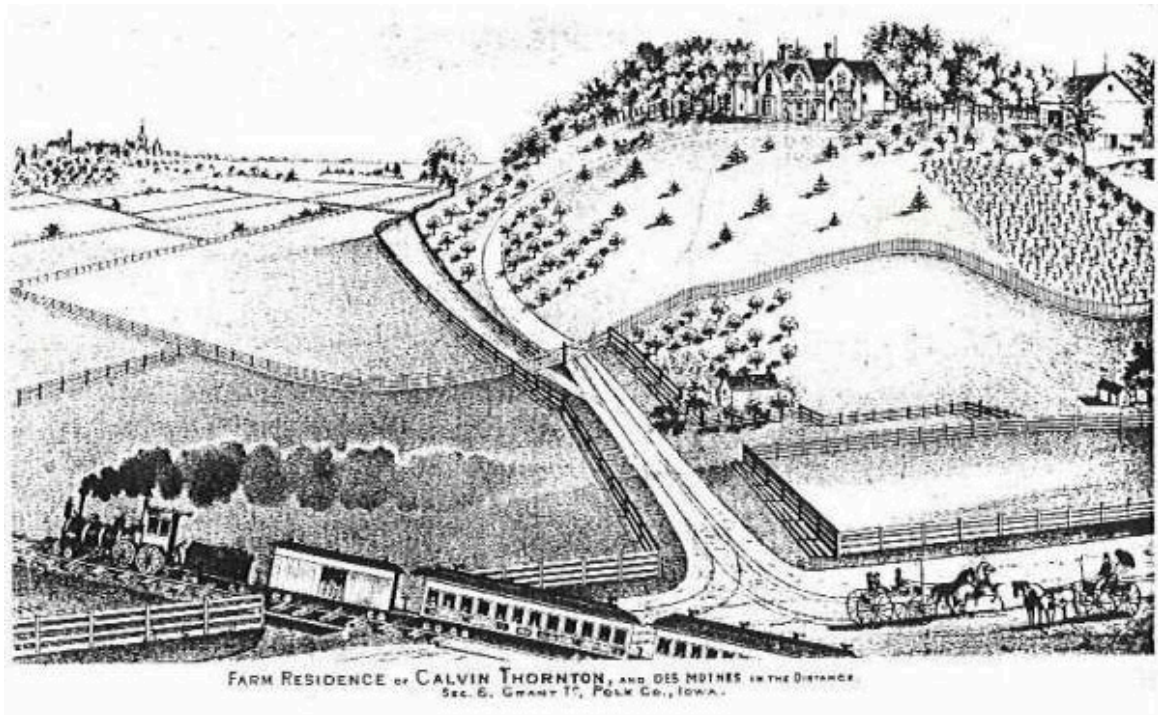
Fair's second Friday. Many friends and family members have joined them over the years but these three remain constant. While some volunteer the others enjoy the Fair, proudly sporting their Official Volunteer T-shirts.

Teresa and Jody have many fond memories while volunteering for the Foundation, such as helping people find something specific on the Fairgrounds or directing Fairgoers needing First Aid.

But they have one special memory. The Fair used to host a Corn Feed at the Agriculture Building right behind their water booth. After watching the event for a few years, they decided to pass out toothpicks, which was very much appreciated by the guests.

We are thankful for this extra effort expended during their volunteering experience. Jody added one final thought: "You wouldn't believe how many people wanted a piece of ice afterwards to clean off their hands and face."

**Thank you to Jody, Todd, Teresa, Charley and all our John Deere Financial volunteers!**



### A Permanent Home

As many of you know, the Fair traveled around the state after its first few years in Fairfield in 1854, usually staying in the same community for two years. As early as 1855 there were discussions that "permanent arrangements [be] made for its accommodation." Finally in 1879, the Fair did move to Des Moines but the current location wasn't dedicated until 1886. The above image shows a rendering of the Thornton property around which the current Fairgrounds spread over the ensuing decades to encompass the current 450-acre site. You can just see Grandfather's Barn in the upper

right-hand corner and the Thornton home which now houses the Ralph H. Deets Museum at top-center!

A historian at the time wrote, "There is doubtless no more beautiful site for the Fair in the U.S. Situated about two miles east of the State Capitol, it rises from the plain in a beautiful and slightly eminence from which the country for miles to the west, northwest and southwest stretches out before the view."

For more Iowa State Fair history, [visit this link](#) on the Fair's website. The above information was taken from the publication, *Historical Highlights of the Iowa State Fair*.



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